

## Ontario 2022 Election Questions

May 25, 2022

Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada is committed to supporting patients and families affected by a brain tumour through research, information, support, and education. We also work to change practices and policies that are not inclusive of the brain tumour community.

This year, our advocacy efforts have focused on equal access to drugs and treatments for brain tumour patients, and ensuring research into brain tumours receives recognition and increased funding. A recent survey highlighted significant challenges experienced by our community during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for caregivers.

During this provincial election campaign, we invite you to engage with provincial candidates about these issues that are of critical importance to the brain tumour community. You may find opportunities to speak with candidates in door-to-door candidacy campaigns, community gatherings, regional debates, and town hall meetings. You may also choose to write or email the candidates in your area. We have developed the following questions that can be posed to provincial candidates. We encourage you to use these questions in your conversations.

### 1. Clearing Surgical and Treatment Backlogs

Background:

The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in reduced access to treatment and supportive services for the brain tumour community. These delays have exacerbated the sense of isolation and distress resulting from the diagnosis of a life-threatening illness. Brain tumour patients and their families are also disproportionately affected by surgery and treatment cancellations and delays due to the pandemic. These appointments are vital for brain tumour patient survival and wellbeing.

Question:

What is your party's plan to prioritize the clearing of surgical and treatment backlogs to ensure that brain tumour patients are better supported to receive timely life-saving care?

### 2. Improving Access to Take Home Cancer Drugs in Ontario

Background:

There are only a few standard treatment options for brain tumours. In Canada, each province and territory take a different approach to what care is provided and how it is accessed, making



treatment for brain tumour patients inequitable across the country. Under the current Ontario system, cancer patients younger than 65 face out of pocket costs, delays and distress when they try to access the take home cancer drugs (THCD) that their lives depend on (ex. temozolomide). Ontario's system for THCDs is a decade behind the Western provinces, Northwest Territories, and Quebec, who have all developed mechanisms to offer equal, faster and more affordable (at no cost) access to THCDs.

Question:

Currently, brain tumour patients rely on provincial pharma-care programs to access most of their drug treatments. There are many gaps in those systems that cause delays in access, putting patients at further risk of harm. What is your party's plan to ensure Ontario will develop and implement an accessible and efficient no-cost program for THCDs to ensure equitable access to life-saving treatment and care?

### 3. Long Term Care and Caregiver Support

Background:

There is no cure for most brain tumours. People live with the disease and its various impacts on their wellbeing. The health care system in Ontario, however, continues to focus on care in the acute setting. Persons with brain tumours and their caregivers continue to struggle to find adequate support services that provide them good quality of life and appropriate "long term" care.

A recent community survey by Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada found the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the sense of isolation and distress resulting from diagnosis of this life-threatening illness. Outpatient services are more difficult to access, and home care is often unpredictable or inadequate. Appropriate rehabilitation and long-term care options are also lacking.

Question:

How does your party define "long term care" and how do your long-term care improvement plans include the needs of persons living with neurological conditions like brain tumours? Are community-based services included in your plans? What are your plans to support at-home caregivers?

### 4. Support for Research and Innovation



Background:

The research community continues to make progress in the field of brain tumours, but we still have much to learn. While research is federally funded, there are many programs, such as the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, that depend heavily upon provincial funding. Additionally, the advancement of biomedical manufacturing in Canada will depend on provincial funding to ensure adequate protection of the health of Canadians, including those with a brain tumour diagnosis. Three projects that are currently a priority for the brain tumour field are the funding to provide Proton Beam Therapy in Ontario, equipment to support the building of a Compact Accelerator Neutron Source that could advance Boron Neutron Capture Therapies in Canada, and building the capacity to produce Canadian sources for many drugs that could permit better access for patients (i.e. the drug Lomustine (CCNU) of which there is currently a limited supply available for Canadians, and is due to be discontinued in 2025).

Question:

What is your party's stance on supporting health research and innovation, and what are your funding priorities in this area?

5. Support for Training the Next Generation of Healthcare Professionals

Background:

Treatment and care for brain tumours requires extensive specialisation and training of a range of healthcare professionals and academic experts. Decades of underfunding for post-secondary education has led to cutbacks that severely impact research and development at a time when there is a growing need. Many experts have been pulled into other areas to combat COVID-related concerns and issues. Brain tumour patients require a commitment from provincial leaders for expanding the health care & innovation workforce.

Question:

How will your party prioritize education and training of highly specialised experts to ensure they are capable of advancing research and providing the highest-quality care for brain tumour patients?

*If you have questions about advocacy-related content, please contact:  
Sarah Rogers, Advocacy and Information Services Specialist  
srogers@braintumour.ca*

